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THE CONFERENCE ON CHILD-HELPING
SOCIETIES; ITS ORIGIN AND
PURPOSE

Charles W. Birtwell

(Reprinted from the Proceedings of the Conference
on the Care of Dependent and Delinquent Children,
State Charities Aid Association of New
York, November 14-16, 1893)

This little pamphlet in what is left of
its original brown cover is the
only bit of information I have
been able to discover. It ~~has~~ ^{has} been
in my own library and should be
placed ^{eventually} with other material of my
collecting, in the library of the
Simmons College School of Social Work.

Return soon, please, to

W. H. F.
23 Francis Ave. Cambridge

PUBLICATIONS
OF THE
CONFERENCE OF CHILD-HELPING SOCIETIES,
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS.

NUMBER 1.

JULY, 1895.

The Conference of Child-Helping Societies,
ITS ORIGIN AND PURPOSE.

ACCOUNT GIVEN BY

CHARLES W. BIRTWELL,

General Secretary of the Boston Children's Aid Society,

AT A CONFERENCE ON THE

Case of Dependent and Delinquent Children, held under the
Auspices of the State Charities Aid Association of
New York, November 14-16, 1893.

RE-PRINTED FROM THE PROCEEDINGS.

ADDRESS THE SECRETARY OF THE CONFERENCE OF CHILD-
HELPING SOCIETIES, AT CHARITY BUILDING,
CHARDON STREET, BOSTON, MASS.

OFFICERS
OF THE
Conference of Child-Helping Societies
FOR 1894-95.

PRESIDENT: HON. GEORGE S. HALE,
President of the Boston Children's Aid Society.

VICE PRESIDENTS:

REV. FREDERICK B. ALLEN,
of the Board of Managers of the Dedham Boys' Home.

HON. FRANK B. FAY,
General Agent of the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention
of Cruelty to Children.

REV. VARNUM A. COOPER,
Supt. of the New England Home for Little Wanderers.

THOMAS F. RING,
President of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

DR. A. B. HEATH,
Commissioner of Public Institutions of the City of Boston.

MRS. FREDERIC CUNNINGHAM,
of the Board of Managers of the Church Home.

JOHN B. F. EMERY,
Special Agent for Children of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

CHARLES W. BIRTWELL,
General Secretary of the Boston Children's Aid Society.

SECRETARY: MISS EMILY GREENE BALCH.

TREASURER: CHARLES E. GRINNELL,
of the Board of Directors of the Massachusetts Society for the
Prevention of Cruelty to Children.

CHAIRMAN OF COMMITTEE ON MEETINGS AND MEMBERSHIP:
MISS FRANCES R. MORSE,
of the Associated Charities of Boston.

CHAIRMAN OF COMMITTEE ON LIBRARY:
REV. JOHN GRAHAM BROOKS.

CHAIRMAN OF COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION AND CO-OPERA-
TION:
REV. FREDERICK B. ALLEN.

This was the early example of Birtwell, having brought it to the point of action his ideal of coöperation by a group of agencies aiming at some community need.

THE CONFERENCE OF CHILD-HELPING SOCIETIES, ITS ORIGIN AND PURPOSE.

BY CHARLES W. BIRTWELL.

The last half century has been marked by a striking development of organizations for conference on social problems. It has been pointed out that in the main the movement has been from the international to the national, and from the national to the local conference, the latter finding expression in charity organization. Close upon this subdivision of territory has followed a constantly increasing specialization of subject. The Conference of Child-Helper Societies of Boston and vicinity, of which I have been asked to give an account, illustrates organization for local conference on a special subject.

Early in 1890, representatives of four child-helping agencies in Boston, all of which happened to be private societies, addressed the following call to the public and private child-helping agencies in and near that city :

“ The question having been raised by representatives of various societies in Boston and vicinity engaged in the care of children and interested in finding homes for them, etc., whether such societies might not coöperate in some way to their mutual advantage, we, the undersigned, would suggest that a conference of delegates from such societies be held on Friday, February 14th, * * * for an interchange of views upon this subject.

“ We would respectfully urge your board to appoint as many as two, if possible, and not more than five, of your own number, or those in your employ, to represent your Society at this conference. It is hoped that delegates will be chosen who will be able to be present, as we are desirous that your Society shall be represented. Any persons officially connected with your Society will be welcome

at the meeting, but only delegates will be entitled to vote. The appointment of delegates will imply nothing more than a willingness to consult together for the common good of our work in behalf of children."

About sixty-seven delegates, representing twenty-seven societies, met, and, after discussion, voted:

"That a committee of nine be appointed, consisting of the Chair and eight others to be chosen by him, to consider and report at a future meeting of this Conference what may be done to relieve the difficulties, improve the methods, and increase the efficiency, of the philanthropic work of Boston and vicinity in behalf of children and youth; and that the committee be authorized to fill vacancies occurring in its own number, and to invite such societies as it may please, in addition to those now represented, to send delegates to any future conference."

In the natural course of events, the Committee of Nine appointed a sub-committee of three to wrestle with the problem of permanent organization. The sub-committee met from time to time for about a year, and with much pains constructed one scheme after another involving combination and coöperation of various kinds and degrees, especially in the direction of placing children in families, but at last abandoned them all for the final result of their thought — a permanent general conference of child-helping agencies, deliberative rather than executive in character. As people holding different opinions and following radically different methods were to be brought together, the plan must be at once simple and inclusive. Clearly, too, it would be fatal to the very purposes of the organization to adopt schemes of executive coöperation which might commit the whole body to specific and present methods and embarrass freedom of thought and discussion.

At a second meeting of the Conference, held February 5, 1891, the plan referred to and a constitution embodying it were reported and adopted. The constitution, avoiding the question of the exact territory to be covered, provided that the organization should

be called "The Conference of Child-Helping Societies." The following extracts from the constitution will throw further light on the purpose and plan of organization of the Conference:

"Its object shall be the discussion of problems relating to the relief, care, education, and protection of dependent, exposed, wayward and delinquent children, and the recommendation of measures for their welfare.

"Any official of a child-helping agency shall be eligible to membership. Any person interested in the objects of the Conference shall be eligible to associate membership.

"Each member shall pay a yearly assessment not exceeding one dollar, the amount to be fixed at the annual meeting, and to fall due at that meeting.

"The officers of the Conference shall be a President, one or more Vice-Presidents, a Secretary, a Treasurer, and a Chairman of each Standing Committee, who together shall be a Council charged with the general supervision of the Conference."

It was provided, also, that there should be Standing Committees on "Meetings and Membership," "Library," and "Information and Coöperation"; that the Council should convene the annual meeting in October or November, and should call at least two other meetings during the year.

The membership, it should be noted, includes public as well as private agencies, and not merely such as deal with children exclusively, nor even of necessity directly. So there are members from the Associated Charities, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, the City Missionary Society, the Commissioners of Public Institutions, the State Board of Lunacy and Charity, the College Settlements, the Massachusetts Emergency and Hygiene Association, etc., as well as of the societies and institutions whose titles tell of direct or exclusive work for children. Yet in every instance, of course, there must be a vital relation to some phase of the child-problem.

Moreover, whatever the ground of eligibility, the members represent themselves only. After the meeting for organization

they ceased to be the accredited delegates of the appointing bodies; the latter were thus absolved of responsibility, and the machinery of the Conference simplified.

In 1892 there were two hundred and three regular members and nine associate members, the former representing sixty-four agencies.

What, now, has the Conference done? One of its earliest meetings, in November, 1891, was devoted to the question of the removal of the city truant school from Deer Island and proximity to institutions for criminals to the mainland, in accordance with a law enacted by our Legislature. The law had been passed five years before, and provided that the school should be so removed "forthwith." Curious, indeed, is a City Hall dictionary! The Superintendent of Schools and members of the School Committee were among the earnest speakers at this interesting meeting, which was of value in the agitation that has finally induced action by the city government. A truant school in accordance with the law is building.

In February, 1892, at the request of the Ward VIII Conference of the Associated Charities, the question of "baby-farming" and legislation for the better protection of infants was laid before the Conference. There resulted a union of forces between our Conference and the State Board of Lunacy and Charity in behalf of the needed legislation. A committee was appointed to confer with an officer of the Board in drafting a bill, the members of the Conference were notified of the hearing on the subject, representatives of the Conference addressed the Committee of the Legislature on Public Charitable Institutions, the bill was favorably reported and passed. In November of the same year, an officer of the State Board reported to the Conference as to the working of the law.

During the meetings of 1892, it was planned that the Conference should survey successively the work of the State, of the city, and of private charity, in behalf of destitute, neglected, dependent and wayward children. We got as far as the private charities,

when, it is needless to say, we had to abandon any thought of exhaustive treatment, and content ourselves with a few samples.

The treatment of juvenile offenders was the subject of a meeting which bore fruit in the appointment of a committee to confer with our judges and draft legislation to remedy a defect in our laws through which we had discovered that juvenile offenders were being committed for non-payment of fines to institutions for adults. At this meeting probation work was presented as well as the work of institutions.

The programme for the next meeting of the Conference, to be held on the twenty-first of this month, includes the report of the committee to which I have just referred, a paper on "Children in Almshouses in Massachusetts," and an address on "The Public Care of Children in Australia," by Miss Spence, from whom we are to have the pleasure of hearing this afternoon.

The article in the October number of "Lend a Hand" on "Annual Reports of Child-Caring Organizations," by Mr. Folks, the secretary of the association under whose auspices we are met, is to be published as a separate pamphlet at the expense of the Conference for distribution to members and throughout the State. The paper should be circulated in your own city and State.

A manual, also, is being prepared to lay before the judges of the State information as to the alternatives the law affords them in the disposition of juvenile offenders, the character of the various institutions, the use of probation, private charities, etc.

I have not spoken of all the work of the Conference. Yet I am confident that we are only at the threshold of the possibilities of such a representative body of public opinion thus simply and effectively focused on definite subjects. The one caution is that such a conference shall not allow itself to exert influence in excess of its knowledge. Its opinions and recommendations may easily be taken for more than they are worth by a public that is unable to measure accurately its fund of information.

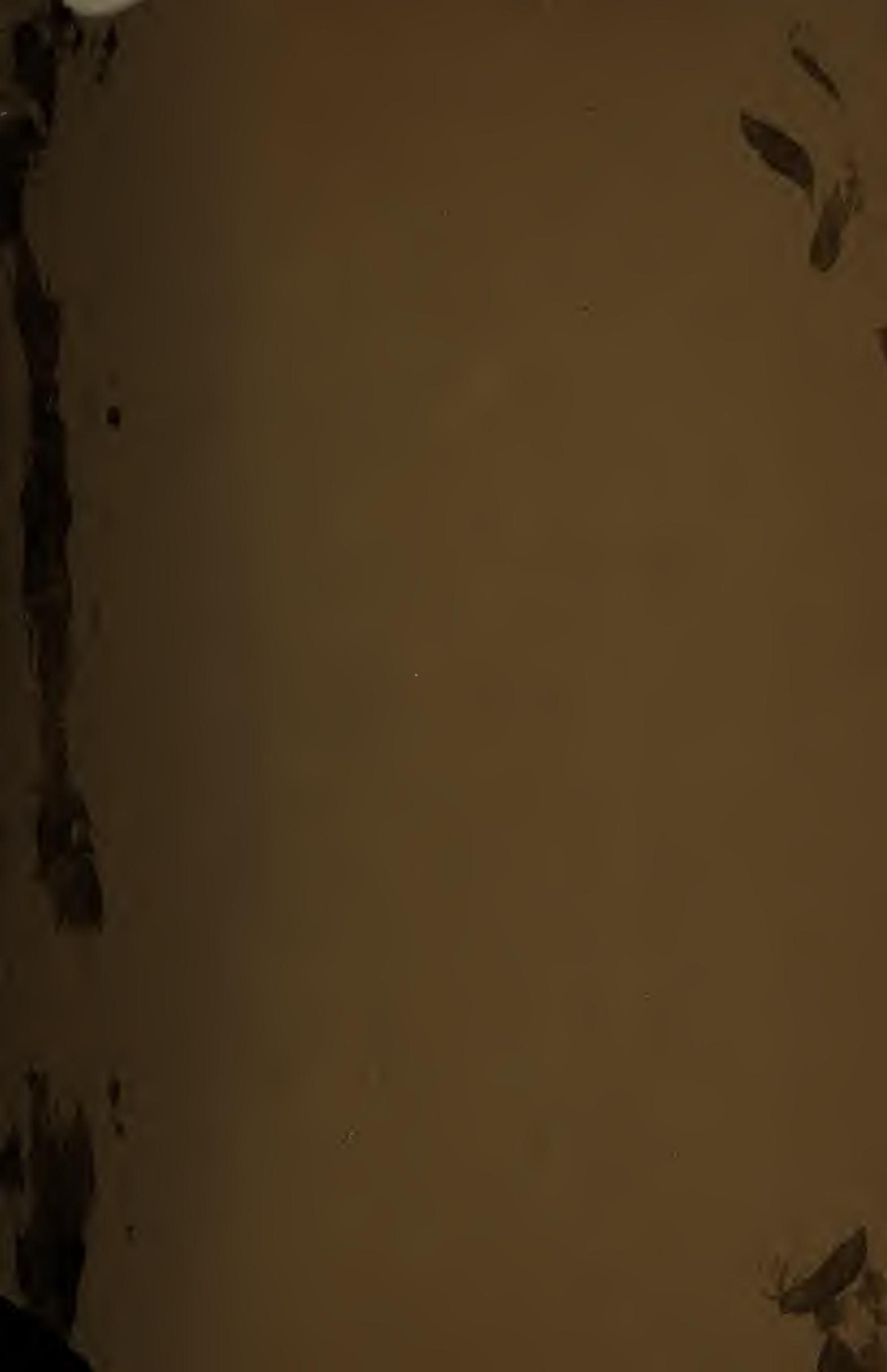
I shall be pleased to report to my fellow-members the admirable object lesson in the art of conferring that has been presented here the past few days.

1 Juvenile
Offenders
&
Probation
W.H. Par

64
by
Henry
Baker, Esq.
1895
revised
1903
by him

Emily Balch was succeeded by
Mrs. Annie Straig, as Secretary,
and she by
William H. Bear, who was Sec.
for about two years.
Harvey H. Parker then became Sec.
and while occupying that position
finished the Manual referred to on
page 7. It was revised in 1903 by him.

In 1906 the law providing for the
establishment of the Boston Juvenile
Court was passed and Harvey was
appointed first Judge of the new
Court by Gov. Curtis Guild.





Mrs Burns

the author

watered her Pea

work

for us more

for a few more

I need water

"for the sun?"

Can we see them?

long before the glow

